

A Brief History of the Sheriff's Department

Warren County, Kentucky

Prepared upon request of Sheriff Brett Hightower

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The Study

While there are a number of historically themed publications about our county, generally available at the Warren County Public Library and at the Special Collections department of the Western Kentucky University Library, there is no comprehensive listing of sheriffs. This is a first attempt.

Corrections or additions are welcome. The author has documented each source used to identify sheriffs for each year since the county's founding.

Where incomplete or contradictory information was discovered, the reader is provided both the raw information and the author's analysis.

Assistance was provided by staffs of the above-mentioned WKU Library Special Collections, the Warren County Clerk's Office, and the Warren County Public Library, all in Bowling Green; the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives and the Kentucky History Center, both in Frankfort; and several online sources, such as Newspapers.com, The Hathi Trust, and Chronicling America. Online genealogy databases provided important clues as well. The Southern Kentucky Genealogical Society and its members were also a great help.

Chronological Listing of Sheriffs

1797-1799	<u>Elijah M.</u>	1827-1828	<u>Joseph J.</u>
<u>Covington</u>		<u>Smith</u>	
1799-1800	<u>Vincent</u>	1828-1829	<u>William R.</u>
<u>Anderson</u>		<u>Payne</u>	
1801-1802	<u>James Dougan</u>	1829-1830	<u>Chasteen T.</u>
1803-1804	<u>John Marshall</u>	<u>Dunavan</u>	
1804-1805	<u>Simon M.</u>	1831	<u>Thomas</u>
<u>Hubbard</u>		<u>Sterrett</u>	
1805-1806	<u>Robert</u>	1831-1832	<u>Chasteen T.</u>
<u>Wallace</u>		<u>Dunavan</u>	
1807	<u>David</u>	1833	<u>John Keel</u>
<u>Hudspeth</u>		1833-1834	<u>Chasteen T.</u>
1808	<u>James Brown</u>	<u>Dunavan</u>	
1809-1810	<u>Gladin Gorin</u>	1835	<u>W. C. Payne</u>
1811-1812	<u>James Atwood</u>	1835-1836	<u>Chasteen T.</u>
1813-1814	<u>William</u>	<u>Dunavan</u>	
<u>Melton</u>		1837-1838	<u>John Wallace</u>
1815-1816	<u>John Rowntree</u>	1839-1840	<u>Edmund</u>
1817	<u>John Ray</u>	<u>Duncan</u>	
1817-1818	<u>William S.</u>	1841	<u>Robert W.</u>
<u>Tinder</u>		<u>Lucas</u>	
1819-1820	<u>Daniel</u>	1841-1842	<u>Chasteen T.</u>
<u>Doughty</u>		<u>Dunavan</u>	
1821-1822	<u>John Hines</u>	1843	<u>Robert W.</u>
1823-1824	<u>John Porter</u>	<u>Ragland</u>	
1825-1826	<u>Elias B.</u>	1843-1844	<u>Chasteen T.</u>
<u>McFadin</u>		<u>Dunavan</u>	

1845	<u>Presley</u>	1887-1890	<u>James D.</u>
<u>Donaldson</u>		<u>Hines</u>	
1845-1846	<u>Chasteen T.</u>	1891-1894	<u>W. S. Ragland</u>
<u>Dunavan</u>		1895-1897	<u>Robert Rodes,</u>
1847	<u>Isaac Smith</u>	<u>Jr.</u>	
1847-1848	<u>Chasteen T.</u>	1898-1901	<u>A. J. Cole</u>
<u>Dunavan</u>		1902-1905	<u>Robert Rodes,</u>
1849-1850	<u>Richard Curd</u>	<u>Jr.</u>	
1850-1854	<u>Chasteen T.</u>	1906-1909	<u>F. Y.</u>
<u>Dunavan</u>		<u>Patterson, Jr.</u>	
1855-1858	<u>William J.</u>	1910-1913	<u>W. L. McNeal</u>
<u>Hobson</u>		1914-1917	<u>John C. Ray</u>
1859-1862	<u>Pleasant J.</u>	1918-1921	<u>James H.</u>
<u>Potter</u>		<u>Tucker</u>	
1863-1866	<u>Stephen S.</u>	1922-1925	<u>Elijah D.</u>
<u>Potter</u>		<u>Thomas</u>	
1867-1870	<u>William E.</u>	1926-1929	<u>H. Lee Kelley</u>
<u>Duncan</u>		1930-1933	<u>David Ernest</u>
1871-1874	<u>Samuel S.</u>	<u>Phillips</u>	
<u>Johnson</u>		1934-1937	<u>J. Broadley</u>
1875	<u>F. K. Beaven</u>	<u>Davenport</u>	
1875-1878	<u>Euclid H.</u>	1938-1941	<u>Byron R.</u>
<u>Mottley</u>		<u>Hendrick</u>	
1879-1882	<u>Joseph J.</u>	1942-1945	<u>Boyd Downey</u>
<u>Smith</u>		1946-1949	<u>J. Broadley</u>
1883-1886	<u>John F.</u>	<u>Davenport</u>	
<u>Dunavan</u>		1950-1952	<u>Paul Hodges</u>
		1952-1953	<u>Edith Hodges</u>

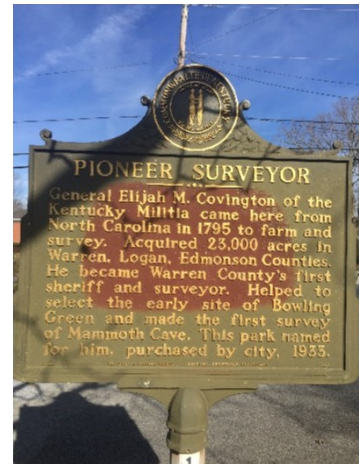
1954-1957	<u>Carl C. Jordan</u>	1978-1981	<u>Jerry 'Peanuts'</u>
1958-1961	<u>Joe Franklin</u>	<u>Gaines</u>	
<u>Hodges</u>		1982-1985	<u>Wayne</u>
1962-1965	<u>Hubert</u>	<u>Constant</u>	
<u>Milburn Phelps</u>		1986-2018	<u>Jerry 'Peanuts'</u>
1966-1969	<u>Christy Watts</u>	<u>Gaines</u>	
1970-1973	<u>Hubert</u>	2019	<u>Brett</u>
<u>Milburn Phelps</u>		<u>Hightower</u>	
1974-1977	<u>Joe Franklin</u>		
<u>Hodges</u>			

Background

The position of Kentucky county sheriff is a powerful one. The original constitution (1792) created only two county offices: Sheriff and Coroner. Appointment was by order of the Governor upon recommendation by the County Court. Tenure was limited to three years, and the sheriff was not allowed to serve consecutive terms due to fears of corruption. This concern was not only because of the inherent arrest powers but also it was feared that taxes collected could be used to further empower that office. The second constitution, in 1799, granted life terms to all other county officers, but limited the term as sheriff to only two years (Section 99) with no re-appointment. The third constitution, in 1850 required elections for county officers and limited sheriffs to two two-year terms, and the fourth in 1891 limited sheriffs to one four-year term, according to a 1977 report of the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission. From the 1970s sheriffs have been able to succeed themselves without limitation.

Warren County: Warren County is located in south central Kentucky and is home to the communities of Bowling Green, Smiths Grove, Oakland, Plum Springs, Woodburn, Rockfield, Rich Pond, Plano, Alvaton, and Richardsville. Warren formed in 1796 from Logan County, Kentucky. Logan was formed in 1792 from Lincoln County. Simpson County was formed in 1819 from parts of Allen, Logan, and Warren counties.

Sheriff's Department: The Warren County, Kentucky, Sheriff's Department has a 222-year history. The department was established in 1797 with the appointment of the first sheriff, Elijah M.



Covington, for whom the city's Covington Park is named. Sheriff Covington received his first six orders from the first Warren County Circuit Court on 4 April 1797. One of them was to arrest Daniel Boone for fighting, according to The Hartford (KY) Herald newspaper. On the back of the order was a reply from Sheriff Covington: "The within Daniel Boone is not found in my bailiwick. E. M. Covington, Sheriff."

Findings

This study revealed that 63 different sheriffs have served 76 terms over Warren County's 223 years. Some family names appear multiple times over the years: Dunavan, Hodges, Johnson, Potter, Ray and Wallace. Appointment of family members, especially sons and brothers, was common.

Sheriff Samuel S. Johnson recommended, and the court appointed, his 14-year-old son as his deputy, according to the 24 February 1871 Bowling Green *Democrat*. The paper said "Tommie is an exceedingly sprightly lad and is singularly faithful to the duties he is required to perform."

The first woman to serve was Sheriff J. Broadley Davenport's wife, who was appointed to serve as sheriff for only two days in early 1938 while her husband assumed another county office; her primary function was to finish collecting the 1937 taxes so her husband could be paid. Sheriffs collected county taxes and fees, from which their pay was deducted. Appointment of family members to complete this collection of taxes was not an uncommon practice at the end of a term, according to the Bowling Green Daily News at the time. The second woman to serve as sheriff-Edith Hodges-was elected in a special election after her husband died in a traffic accident in 1952. She served until the next scheduled election in November 1953. The relationships among other repeating family names warrants further study.

Some sheriff's names are repeated many times in the Chronological Listing of Sheriffs above. This is a result, in part, of the early prohibition against sheriffs serving consecutive terms and later term limitations. This prohibition was later lifted, along with other changes such as term length. The most prevalent, or perhaps persistent, sheriff was Chasteen T. Dunavan, who was appointed or re-elected 9 times between 1829 and 1854, serving a total of 20 years. At least two of those were appointments by the state

governor to replace resigning sheriffs, according to various journals of the Governor, House of Representatives and/or Senate. These and other sources of information compiled in this study are listed in the Annotated Sheriff-Source Listing below.

Jerry "Peanuts" Gaines, Warren County's most recent former sheriff, was the most long-serving sheriff of the county, having been first elected in 1977. He served one term-1978 through 1981, sat out a term, and was elected again in 1985, to serve 1986 through 2018. He shared his philosophy and told many stories of his service as sheriff in William Lynwood Montell's 2011 book Tales from Kentucky Sheriffs:

The sheriff's office belongs to the people. I'm elected by the people. I work for 111,000 people here in Warren County, and they're my bosses. But the chief of police gets his job when only three city commissioners appoint him. State policemen are appointed by a couple of persons on the board. But the people look at the sheriff as their police officer. People call me, and I answer more stuff than lawyers do. I tell people when I hire them, "Treat people like you'd want to be treated...."

Although many sheriffs have served in other city and county offices, and served terms as state representatives and senators, "Peanuts" is arguably the most accomplished sheriff of the modern era, especially within the law enforcement arena. As such, his stories are fascinating.

"Jerry Gaines, nationally as Peanuts ... has served in numerous state, regional, and nationwide organizations—as president, treasurer, sergeant at arms, and chairman. He also created the Sheriff's Prevent Partnership, which focuses on antidrug and antiviolenace initiatives. Sheriff Peanuts Gaines received the Buford Pusser Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Award in 2006, was recognized as Kentucky's Sheriff of the Year in 1987 [and 2010], and was the first sheriff in Kentucky to be presented the Samuel McDowell Jr. Award by the U.S. Marshal Service. ... He was the National Sheriffs' Association president in 2000-2001."

Obviously, "Peanuts" became proficient at re-elections, as the story below recounts how his nickname played a part:

"I was nicknamed Peanuts after my daddy. He was a young man when he worked for a Greek whose vocabulary couldn't say my daddy's name So one day Daddy was eating peanuts, and this fellow nicknamed him Peanuts It used to be that you couldn't campaign within five hundred feet of polls here in Warren County. That means that you can't pass out cards or any kind of literature. So Mr. Higgins, who owns all these Minit Marts, called me one day and said, "Peanuts, I've got an idea for Election Day. I'm going to get you five hundred pounds of peanuts, and you can give them to people and ask them to drop them when going to the polls. They would look down, and there would be the peanuts on the floor. Well, it was about three elections before they caught me doing that! ...

"Peanuts was the first sheriff to have to deal with the modern drug crisis.

His most enduring legacy may be helping create the county Drug Task Force.

I've got a big bus in which I haul senior shoppers to Wal-Mart the second Thursday of each month. I had the bus down at the jail, and the trustees had washed it. ... There was a four-door pickup truck that came through the intersection, and the traffic had stopped. A fellow said to me, "Hey sheriff, they're making meth in that truck."... Well, the girls in the back of the truck had a hot plate hooked to the cigarette lighter, and they were making meth in that truck. They had the tanks right in the back ... One of the trustees said to the ones in the truck, "You all are going to be in here with us tonight." We arrested them right on the spot. We've tried to cut meth makers, but they pop up every night. It's such a cheap thing

to do, so persons in every nationality are doing it. We now have a Drug Task Force here in Warren County, and three of my deputies are on it. ...

One sheriff's tenure was interrupted by "a hostile foreign power." During the Civil War, Kentucky was a border state, never electing to secede from the Union. Both the North and the South occupied Warren County at various times.

When Confederate General Simon Bolivar Buckner's force invaded Kentucky and established a provisional government, Warren County Sheriff Pleasant J. Potter was ordered to turn over the taxes collected so far for 1861. As he was "in the power of a hostile power, and under constraint," he said he did so "under protest," according to a February 1862 petition to the state Legislature. When he refused to turn over his tax receipt records, they were taken anyway. For this, he was "ejected" from the office-see Attachment L to the Sheriff's petition below-and replaced by Lewis W. Potter. Any relation between the two Potters is yet to be determined. Pleasant did have a brother named Lewis, but it is doubtful that his brother would treat him in such a manner, but it was not unheard of during the Civil War.

The length of Lewis W. Potter's tenure is unknown. No references to his service have been located. It appears that both the court and the public continued to consider Pleasant J. Potter as the legitimate Sheriff. Perhaps it is a testament of the integrity of the local citizens that they continued

paying taxes to the ousted Sheriff, even though he cautioned the revenue might not make it to Frankfort. Indeed, it did not. The following document, with attachments, is from the February 1862 Journal of the House of Representatives and outlines the events of 1861 and states the sheriff's petition on the behalf of the county's loyal citizens. The document includes statements from representatives of both North and South. They were presented to the legislature after the withdrawal of the Confederate Army on behalf of the taxpayers whose tax payments had been confiscated.

Legislative Document No. 15.

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

FEBRUARY 26, 1862.

Mr. UNDERWOOD presented the following petition, viz :

To the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky :

The undersigned, sheriff of Warren county, arrived in Frankfort yesterday evening, having come from home to lay the following matters before the Legislature: On the 30th September last, Robt. A. Johnson called on the undersigned and demanded of him all the money belonging to the State of Kentucky or county of Warren in his hands as sheriff. Said Johnson acted under the order of a man named Brown, whose signature was to the written order which was shown to the undersigned by said Johnson, and a copy of which is herewith filed, marked (A.) except the signature of said Brown.

On the 28th of September last, the undersigned deposited in the Bowling-Green branch bank \$1,000 to the credit of the Frankfort branch of the Bank of Kentucky, for revenue purposes, as will be seen by the cashier's certificate, herewith filed, marked (B.) Some time afterwards this money was taken from the bank, as the undersigned is informed.

After the 30th of September, the undersigned ceased to collect the revenue, except from those who tendered payment; and he considered it his duty to receive it, although he told the citizens he did not know that he could get the money to Frankfort; but many insisted on paying their taxes to the undersigned, as the best mode of escaping the payment of double taxes; and this petitioner considered it his official duty to take the money.

On the 28th of October last, by an order herewith filed, marked (C.) your petitioner was told he might collect the county taxes, and account for the same to the proper county officers.

On the 14th December last, your petitioner was ordered by Geo. W. Johnson, Provisional Governor, to pay over to the Treasurer all moneys belonging to the State, and to settle his accounts with the Auditor. This he was required to do "*immediately.*" This order is herewith filed, marked (D.)

Your petitioner required some evidence as to who was the Auditor, and he was furnished with paper herewith filed, marked (E.)

Your petitioner being in the power of a hostile army, and under constraint, proceeded to settle, as ordered, with Josiah Pillsbury; but settled under protest, as will be seen by the order of said Pillsbury, indorsed on exhibit (D.)

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PETITION.

[Doc. No. 15.]

On the 20th December, your petitioner paid to John Burnam, the Treasurer, \$941 67; but he paid it under protest. And he did not do this until he was furnished the evidence contained in the paper marked (F,) herewith filed, that said Burnam was the Treasurer; and he also obtained from said Burnam the paper herewith filed, marked (G,) showing that the payment was made under protest. The Auditor's quietus for the money paid is herewith filed, marked (H.)

The books, &c., pertaining to the office of sheriff were taken from this petitioner under circumstances partially explained in the paper herewith filed, marked (I.)

Your petitioner prays that these matters may be referred to the appropriate committee for investigation, that he may have credit for the sums so forced from him, and that he may be relieved from all costs and damages, and any judgment which may have been rendered against him for the revenue of 1861; and that all other proper relief in the premises may be afforded.

Your petitioner is now ready to resume the duties of his office; and he prays for an act relieving the citizens of his county, who have paid taxes to L. W. Potter, acting as sheriff for the Provisional Government, as it was called, from a second payment of taxes

All which is most respectfully submitted.

FEBRUARY 26th, 1862.

P. J. POTTER.

(A.)

HEADQUARTERS CENTRAL DIVISION, KY., }
Bowling-Green, Sept. 30, 1861. }

Col. Robert J. Johnson:

You will proceed at once to take from the sheriff of Warren county all the funds in his hands belonging to the State of Kentucky and to the county of Warren, and hold the same subject to further orders. You will make out and return to this department a full and accurate account of the funds so taken; specifying how much thereof belongs to the State and how much to the county.

[A copy, except the signature of Col. Brown.]

Under this order, Col. Johnson took one thousand dollars which I had a few days before paid in the branch bank of Kentucky at Bowling-Green for revenue purposes, and had taken the cashier's (T. C. Calvert's) certificate for same, to be paid at Frankfort, Ky., to credit of Auditor.

P. J. POTTER.

(B.)

OFFICE BANK OF KENTUCKY, }
Bowling-Green, Sept. 28, 1861. }

P. J. Potter, sheriff of Warren county, Kentucky, has this day deposited at this office one thousand dollars for credit of Frankfort Branch Bank of Kentucky, for revenue purposes for 1861.

THO. C. CALVERT, *Cashier.*

Doc. No. 15.]

PETITION.

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(C.)

BOWLING-GREEN, KY., Oct. 28th, 1861.

I am directed by the A. A. General of S. B. Buckner, Brigadier General, to say to the sheriff of Warren county, State of Kentucky, that he can, under the order of September 30th, 1861, collect the county tax for said county of Warren, and account for the same to the proper officers of said county.

G. H. VIXON, *Major Commanding Police Guard.*

(D.)

EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
Bowling-Green, Ky., Dec. 14, 1861. }

PLEASANT J. POTTER, Esq., *Sheriff of Warren County, Kentucky:*

You are hereby commanded and required, in accordance with provisions of an act approved December 11th, 1861, to pay over to the Treasurer all sums now in your hands belonging to the State, and to adjust and settle your accounts with the Auditor. This you will immediately proceed to perform.

GEORGE W. JOHNSON, *Provisional Governor.*

(E.)

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BOWLING-GREEN, KY.

I, A. Frank Brown, Clerk of the Council of the Provisional Government of the State of Kentucky, do certify that on the 7th day of December, 1861, by a message of the Governor, through R. McKee, Secretary of State, the name of Josiah Pillsbury was recommended for the office of Auditor *pro tem.*, and that said nomination was unanimously confirmed by said Council, and on the 11th day of December thereafter the Secretary of State presented to said Council the bond of said Pillsbury, with the approval of the Governor, and thereupon said Council confirmed said approval. Said Pillsbury then appeared before said Council and took the oath required by law.

Given under my hand, this 19th day of December, 1861.

A. FRANK BROWN, *Clerk of the Council.*

(F.)

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BOWLING-GREEN, KY.

I, A. Frank Brown, Clerk of the Council of the Provisional Government of the State of Kentucky, do hereby certify that on the 17th day of December, 1861, a message from Geo. W. Johnson, Provisional Governor, was received and read before said Council, nominating John Burnam for the office of Treasurer, *vice* T. L. Burnett, resigned, which nomination was unanimously confirmed; and on the 18th day of December, 1861, the bond of said Burnam was presented to said Council with the Governor's approval thereof, and thereupon the approval of said bond was confirmed by said Council, whereupon said John Burnam appeared and took the oath prescribed by law.

Given under my hand as Clerk aforesaid, this 20th day of December, 1861.

A. FRANK BROWN.

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PETITION.

[Doc. No. 15.]

(G.)

STATE OF KENTUCKY, WARREN COUNTY.

I, John Burnam, do state that upon the payment by P. J. Potter, late sheriff of Warren county, of money to me as Treasurer of the Provisional Government of Kentucky, said Potter did state that he made said payment under protest.

JOHN BURNAM.

DECEMBER 20, 1861.

(H.)

STATE OF KENTUCKY, AUDITOR'S OFFICE,
Bowling-Green, Dec. 20, 1861. }

Received the receipt of the Treasurer of the Provisional Government of the State of Kentucky of this date to P. J. Potter, for nine hundred and forty-one dollars and sixty-seven cents in cash and claim, in full of the revenue collected by him to date for the year eighteen hundred and sixty-one.

Cash	\$936 77
Claim	4 90
	<hr/>
	\$941 67

J. PILLSBURY, Auditor.

(I.)

P. J. POTTER, late Sheriff of Warren County, Kentucky:

You have been ejected from office by an act of the Provisional Government, and Lewis W. Potter has been appointed your successor. You are hereby commanded to deliver up to him all the books and papers pertaining to your office without delay, otherwise you will be dealt with summarily.

Given under my hand this December 19th, 1861.

W. MESSICK, Commissioner.

I presented this order to P. J. Potter on the 20th December, 1861, when he refused to deliver the books and papers herein alluded to, which were lying on his table; and as he refused, I took them myself, which consists of a copy of the Commissioner's book for Warren county, Kentucky, for the year 1861; also, a lot of summons, subpoenas, bench warrants, warrants of arrest, Auditor's list for 1861, and non-resident list, 1861.

L. W. POTTER. S. W. C.

Methodology

Identifying a sheriff for each of the 222 years was challenging. As a beginning genealogist and longtime history buff, the author found the learning process intense. Sources ranged from early city business directories and bound transcriptions of County Court minutes-both available at WKU-to original election records in the archives of the County Court, to election reports on file in the Kentucky Division of Libraries and Archives in Frankfort. No individual collection or type of record was complete. At about the midpoint of the 6-month research process, there remained more than 20 individual years to be “named;” 1892 was the last to be named. Each visit to a library or archive revealed new information-a previous or following tenure might be expanded to name a “singleton” year or a new sheriff might be identified. Sometimes there was a sheriff who served only a single year, and occasionally only a few months. A sheriffs’ service was sometimes ended by resignation, by “ejection” (as shown in the above Civil War example), by failure to provide adequate surety bond, or by mandatory term limits. Term limits changed with each new state constitution. When a sheriff left office between elections, new sheriffs were initially appointed by the governor and after 1850 by elections.

Making the process more difficult were sources that proved to be unreliable. In print media, deputies were frequently referred to as “Sheriff.” Newspaper reports were notoriously unreliable, but court records could be confusing, as well. For example, on 6 January 1804, the Warren County

Court-Equity issued an order to Sheriff Simon M. Hubbard; on 17 May 1804, Deputy Sheriff Simon Hubbard reported serving a warrant that had been issued by the Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments. He did so “for John Marshall SWC” (SWC was a common abbreviation on legal documents for Sheriff of Warren County). Then there were 5 other instances of Sheriff Hubbard executing warrants for the Court from May 1804 through May 1805, and a final instance in February 1806. This conflicting information was interpreted as Deputy Sheriff Hubbard serving warrants and filling in at court for Sheriff Marshall, who was sheriff in 1803-1804, and for Sheriff Robert Wallace as well, who was sheriff 1805-1806, with Hubbard serving as Sheriff 1804-1805.

In the example below, “Sheriff” Hubert Milburn Phelps escorted Senator John F. Kennedy during his campaign visit to Bowling Green on October 8, 1960, according to a photo caption. There is no other reference available showing he was sheriff at that time. He was Sheriff during the years 1962-1965. In 1960, he was probably a deputy for Sheriff Joe Franklin Hodges.



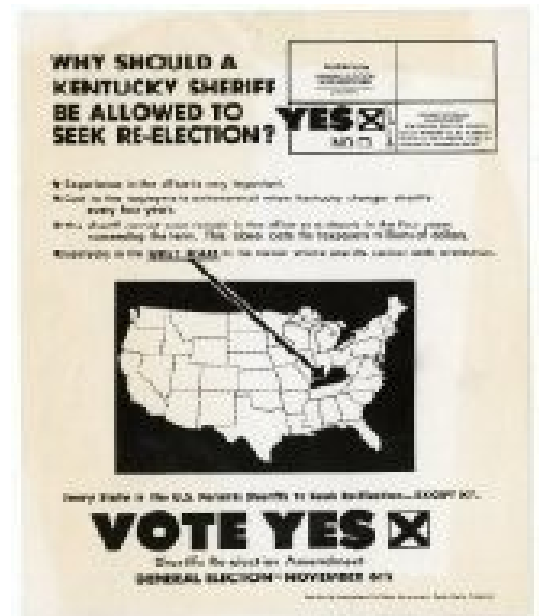
Reprinted photograph showing the visit of Senator John F. Kennedy to Bowling Green, KY on October 8, 1960. The photograph shows "Sheriff Hubert M. Phelps" standing at the right of the photograph with a felt hat and the star patch on his sleeve.

Photo and caption from the Western Kentucky University Library Special Collections.

<https://westernkentuckyuniversity.pastperfectonline.com/photo/D55F829A-3EC6-4A2B-84B4-090235601500>

The Louisville Courier-Journal newspaper frequently reported a sheriff of Warren County as passing through town with prisoners, taking custody of prisoners held there on warrant for Warren County, or just visiting. In 1883, the Courier-Journal mentioned three different names for sheriff of Warren County: John F. Dunavan, Samuel Allen, and J. F. Duncan; this was after mentioning the election of John F. Dunavan in August 1882. This seemingly conflicting information was interpreted as both Allen and Duncan (which might have actually been Dunavan) as deputies serving under Sheriff Dunavan. This was somewhat confirmed with the discovery of a record of a 23 May 1883 execution by Sheriff Dunavan of a warrant issued by Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments. These examples show that newspapers and individual court reports should be considered as perhaps unreliable. Multiple sources were sought to document each year's Sheriff. Five years, however, remain named due solely to single mentions. These were of their appointments as Sheriff in a Governor's Executive Journal or in court orders, without other confirming sources. These years are 1807 (David Hudspeth), 1808 (James Brown), 1809-1810 (Gladin Gorin) and 1843 (Robert W. Ragland).

Complicating the identification of Sheriffs for each year was that each of the first three state constitutions addressed and made significant changes to the law concerning the hiring, tenure and duties of county sheriffs. This can be considered a testament to the importance of the position. For example, sheriffs were not initially allowed to serve concurrent terms, resulting in the need to seek appointment of a new sheriff every third year. Sheriffs also could not serve as deputies after finishing a term. This was later changed to allow sheriffs to be re-elected to consecutive terms. The flyer shown here was promoting this change in the constitution. The flyer is provided by the Western Kentucky University Library Special Collections.



In any case, the term limitations resulted in sheriffs serving alternating terms as sheriffs and as deputies, so confusion as to their appropriate title may be understandable on the part of journalists and even court clerks. The best one can do is compile what the available records show. A chronological Annotated Sheriff & Source Listing is included below for the reader to see the research data that informed the author's findings.

Further research may answer these questions:

1. Were there two Thomas Sterretts in 1831-Senior and Junior, one Sheriff and one Deputy Sheriff? Genealogical records show this may be the case, but no confirming records have been located.
2. Did the county court play games to get around the constitutional succession rules? Perhaps. Chasteen T. Dunavan served nine terms between 1826 and 1854. Ten other sheriffs served between Dunavan's separate tenures; seven served for a period of months before resigning, and three served full 2-year terms. A pattern does emerge: seven apparent resignations resulted in Chasteen T. Dunavan serving repetitive, non-consecutive terms: Thomas Sterrett in 1831, John Keel in 1833, W. C. Payne in 1835, Robert W. Lucas in 1841, Robert W. Ragland in 1843, Presley Donaldson in 1845, and Isaac Smith in 1847. Each short-term sheriff's tenure consistently divided Dunavan's service into two-year terms that complied with the constitutional rule in the 1799 Kentucky Constitution. Dunavan's last term complied with the 1850 constitution, which required elections to the office of sheriff for 4-year terms.
3. Was John Ray's 1817 departure from office related to the court summonses for him and each of his bond securities to answer questions concerning the 1817 collection of taxes from the militia stationed in the county?

Further research may also show relationships, if any, between sheriffs sharing surnames. For example, are John Ray (1816-1817) and John C. Ray

(1914-1917) related? Similarly, what is the relationship between Paul Hodges (1950-1952) and Joe Franklin Hodges (1974-1977), between Joseph J. Smith (there may be two with this name) and Isaac Smith, and between Chasteen T. Dunavan and John F. Dunavan? Are the many Sheriff Potters related? Further study may tell. Exciting discoveries await.

Invaluable assistance in this research was offered by the staffs of Western Kentucky University Library's Special Collections, the Warren County Circuit Clerk's Office, the Warren County Public Library, the Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives in Frankfort and the Kentucky History Center in Frankfort. Sources found to determine sheriff names included Bowling Green City Directories, county election records, election results reports to the secretaries of state, journals of the governors and both houses of the state legislature, newspaper articles, and family photo collections.

Unless otherwise noted below in the Annotated Sheriff and Source Listing, each source was used to document an individual year of service.

Annotated Sheriff & Source Listing

1797-1799 **Elijah M. Covington** Circuit Court Minutes 7 March 1797, Warren County Order Book 1797, 7 April 1798, & January 1799; Warren County Court April 1797 & 5 April 1798, Circuit Court Minutes 1798, The Hartford (Kentucky) Herald 4 December 1912 (concerning the 1797 Circuit Court indictment of Daniel Boone), The Covingtons.

1799-1800 **Vincent Anderson** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 7 February 1799, 7 September 1799, February-March 1800; Warren County Circuit Court-Equity Minutes: Circuit Court-replaced Covington, who resigned-former Sheriff Covington's final payment: 8 pounds, 8 shillings); Warren County Order Book 3 February 1800.

1801-1802 **James Dougan** Record of Appointment by Governor 24 March 1801, Warren County Order Book B December 1801, 15 February 1802, 7 March 1803-"late Marshall."

1803-1804 **John Marshall** Record of Appointment 25 Jan 1803; Warren County Order Book 15 July 1802-recommended, 7 & 28 March 1803, 8 August & 3 Oct 1803; Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments 6 June & 6 September 1803, 6 & 25 January, 25 February & 17 May 1804.

1804-1805 **Simon M. Hubbard** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 6 January 1804, Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments 14 & 17 May 1804, 1 & 2 June 1804, 6 September & (unreadable) September 1804, (unreadable) February & 6 May 1805 and (unreadable) February 1806.

1805-1806 **Robert Wallace** Governor Christopher Greenup Executive Journal-KDLA (appointment 27 November 1804), Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments (unreadable) February 1805; 7 January, (unreadable) February, 11 & 25 April, (unreadable) May 1806.

1807 **David Hudspeth** Governor Christopher Greenup Executive Journal-KDLA (appointed 29 November 1806).

1808 **James Brown** Governor Charles Scott Executive Journal-KDLA (his deputy served in his stead as elector for House of Representatives in September 1808 election of Governor Scott)

1809-1810 **Gladin Gorin** Governor Charles Scott Executive Journal-KDLA (appointed 12 November 1808). No record of activity 1810.

1811-1812 **James Atwood** Appointed 7 December 1810-Governor Charles Scott Executive Journal @ Kentucky Department of Libraries and Archives, Warren County Order Book 6 January 1812.

1813-1814 **William Melton** Warren County Order Book October 1812-Recommendation to Governor for appointment in January, 2 entries 1813, Election Report to Secretary of State 5 August 1814, Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 3 August 1814 Case 147.

1815-1816 **John Rowntree** Record of Appointment 5 December 1814; Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 7 March 1815, 14 March, 27 May, 8 & 19 October 1816, and 6 & 18 August 1817; Warren County Order Book 1815 (twice, once as Rountree), 8 October 1816; Warren County Order

Book 6 January 1817-"A settlement made with John Rowntree sheriff of this county for the two last years. . . ."

1817 **John Ray** Warren County Order Book 6 January 1817-
appointment, January and 4 February 1817; Warren County Circuit Court
17 June 1818 re. 31 November 1817; Acts of the General Assembly of the
Commonwealth of Kentucky 1817.

1817-1818 **William S. Tinder** Warren County Order Book 6 October
1817-appointment, Warren County Circuit Court 4 February, 6 April & 28
May 1818.

1819-1820 **Daniel Doughty** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 29
May 1819, 1 June 1820 Case 335 and 11 & 14 Aug 1820; Court notice 11
Dec 1819 re. tax levy due October 1819; Warren County Order Book;
Election Results to Secretary of State 12 August 1820; Elector report for
Governor 26 August 1820.

1821-1822 **John Hines** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 7
November 1821 Case 337, 7 January 1822; Warren County Order Book 24
January 1822-bond.

1823-1824 **John Porter** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 8 January
1823; 21 February 1823 Case 610 & 2 November 1824, Warren County
Order Book 8 January 1823-appointment, 1824.

1825-1826 **Elias B. McFadin** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 2
May 1825 Case 708, Warren County Order Book 1826.

1827-1828 **Joseph J. Smith** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 26 May 1827 Case 729, Warren County Order Book, Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 14 May 1828 Case 745, The Covingtons.

1828-1829 **William R. Payne** Warren County Order Book January 1828, Journal of the Senate 7 December 1829 (resignation-see Chasteen T. Dunavan 8 December 1829).

1829-1831 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 14 November 1829 Case 745; Warren County Order Book April 1828, 26 December 1831, 27 June 1831; Journal of the Senate 7 December 1829 (appointed to replace Payne).

1831 **Thomas Sterrett** Warren County Order Book 24 January 1831; may have resigned before 25 April 1831 when the county court approved Sheriff Dunavan's appointment of Deputy Thomas Sterrett, Jr. May refer to General Thomas Sterrett 1774-1846 (War of 1812, then Kentucky Militia) or his son Thomas Sterrett, Jr.

1831-1832 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Order Book April 1831, 23 & 27 June 1831, 23 January 1832.

1833 **John Keel** Governor appointment 31 December 1832 (may have resigned prior to April 1833 when Dunavan was again sheriff), Warren County Order Book 28 January 1833-appointment.

1833-1834 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Order Book 25 Jan 1833, 22 April 1833, Election Results Report to Secretary of State 12 & 20

August 1833, 28 October 1833; Journal of the House of Representatives 1834.

1835 **W. C. Payne** Warren County Order Book 26 October 1834-recommended, 26 January 1835; Journal of the Senate 1835-1836.

1835-1836 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Order Book 27 April 1835; Journal of the Senate 1835-1836- appointed to replace Payne, who resigned.

1837-1838 **John Wallace** Warren County Order Book 23 January 1837- appointed, 27 February 1837, 26 February 1838, 23 July & 5 November 1838.

1839-1840 **Edmund Duncan** Warren County Order Book 25 & 26 November 1838, 28 January 1839, 27 April & 23 November 1840; Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 1840.

1841 **Robert W. Lucas** Warren County Order Book 25 January 1838; 25 January, 16 April & 24 May 1841.

1841-1842 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Order Book 24 May 1841-appointment, 24 January 1842, 28 November 1842; Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 25 September 1841, 24 January & 28 November 1842; Green River Gazette-Bowling Green 15 December 1841 (tax reminder).

1843 **Robert W. Ragland** Warren County Order Book 23 January 1843-appointment.

1843-1844 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Order Book May 1843; Election results to governor 10 August 1843 & 8 November 1844; Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 1844.

1845 **Presley Donaldson** Warren County Order Book, Reports Communicated to Both Branches of the Legislature of Kentucky - December 1845, Journal of the Senate 1845-46 (resigned).

1845-1846 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 21 April 1845 Case 1723, Warren County Order Book 1846, Journal of the Senate 1845-46 (replaced Sheriff Donaldson).

1847 **Isaac Smith** Warren County Order Book, Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 13 April & 21 June 1847.

1847-1848 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** Warren County Court Orders 26 July 1847-appointment, 27 September 1847, 25 October 1847, 2 December 1847, 24 July 1848 (bond), 24 January 1848, The 1847 Kentucky State Register.

Warren County Circuit Court 27 September 1847, 25 October and 2 December 1847; 24 January and 24 July 1848.

1849-1850 **Richard Curd** Warren County Order Book; Louisville Daily Courier article; Legislative Document No. 10 (Kentucky Public Documents 1850-1851); Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 14 March, 16 June and 27 & 28 August 1849

1850-1854 **Chasteen T. Dunavan** 1850 U.S. Census; Warren County Order Book & Louisville Daily Courier article 1850; Kentucky Register

("C.F. Dunavan"); Louisville Daily Courier article 1852; Journal of the Senate 1850-1851; Sheriff's Bond 2 June 1851, 28 Feb 1853, 1 Jun 1853, 22 May 1854; Warren County Court Order 22 May 1854; Election Results to state 10 August 1854.

1855-1858 **William J. Hobson** Warren County Order Book, Franklin Circuit Court 1863 case to collect revenue that he collected 1857-1858, 1856 Louisville Daily Courier article, (served 1855-1859 per Louisville Courier-Journal obituary on 8 September 1880), Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 2 June 1856; Sheriff's Bonds 1 January 1855, 26 May 1856, 25 May 1857, 25 May 1858.

1859-1862 **Pleasant J. Potter** Warren County Circuit Court Orders 3 January 1859-appointment, 28 February 1859-bond, 28 March, 26 September, 27 October & 26 November 1859, 25 June 1860-bond, 23 December 1861, 27 March 1862, 23 June 1862, 10 November 1862; Louisville Daily Courier (election results) 5 August 1858, Journal of the Senate 1863, (Legislative Document No. 15-Petition to General Assembly Feb 26, 1862), Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 21 January 1859, late January 1861 & 2 August 1862; Sheriff's Bonds 28 February 1859, 25 June 1860, 24 June 1861, 23 June 1862.

1861 **Lewis W. Potter** (Unknown relation to Pleasant J. Potter).
Journal of the Senate 1863 (Legislative Document No. 15-Petition to General Assembly Feb 26, 1862) - Appointed 19 December 1861 by

Provisional Governor Johnson during CSA occupation. Not included in the Chronological Listing as there is no reference to his actual service, if any.

1863-1866 **Stephen S. Potter** Warren County Court Orders 23 March 1863, Election Report to State 8 & 11 November 1864 and 10 August 1865, Annual Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts of the State of Kentucky 1866; Sheriff's Bonds 1 June 1863, 22 July 1864, 27 March 1865, 26 March 1866.

1867-1870 **William E. Duncan** Louisville Daily Courier 9 August 1866 (election results); Louisville Daily Courier 5 & 6 August 1868 (election results); Louisville Daily Courier 1 September 1868 (passed through with prisoners); Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 2 November 1867, 2 November 1868, 27 January 1869, 14 March 1869, 15 & 23 July 1869 and 6 December 1870; Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky 1869-1871; 1870 U.S. Census for Warren County (occupation-sheriff); Journal of the Senate 1875-1876 (concerning 1873 court case in Franklin County); Sheriff's Bonds 3 September 1866, 28 January 1867, 25 May 1868, 6 April 1869, 27 August 1870. Probably William Edwin Duncan, born 1820 in Warren County.

1871-1874 **Samuel S. Johnson** Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 10 February and 23 March 1871, 2 January 1872, 30 July and 2 November 1872, 3 January & 28 June 1873; Warren County Order Book & Tax Payer handbill (WKU Special Collections) 14 August 1873; Louisville Courier-Journal (re-elected with no opposition) 6 August 1872; Sheriff's Bonds 2

January 1871, 25 March 1872, 12 May 1873 and 28 March 1874; Master Commissioner's Sale 28 October 1874-Deed Book 44; Journal of the Senate 1875-1876 (concerning 1873 court case in Franklin County); Report of the Auditor of Public Accounts of the State of Kentucky for the Fiscal Years Ending October 1874 and October 1875; Louisville Courier-Journal (said he served two terms 1870-1875) 3 September 1880.

1875 **F. K. Beaven** Journal of the Senate 1873-1874 (no record of having provided bond to collect 1875 taxes, so may have been replaced by Mottley).

1875-1878 **Euclid H. Mottley** Sheriff's Bond 28 December 1874, 3 January 1876 and 1 January 1877; Election Results to Secretary of State 4 May 1875; Gardner & Gaines' 1876 Bowling Green Directory; Elections Reports to Secretary of State 8 August 1877 and 8 August 1878 (3 reports).
1879-1882 **Joseph J. Smith** Louisville Courier Journal article 6 August 1878 (on election); Sheriff's Bond 1 January 1879, 3 January 1880, 3 January 1881 and 27 February 1882; Election Reports to State 5 August 1878, 2 August 1880, 5 November 1880, 4 August 1881 & 10 August 1882; Louisville Courier Journal article (escorting prisoners) 14 November 1882.

1883-1886 **John F. Dunavan** Louisville Courier-Journal 7 August 1882 (elected); Sheriff's Bond 1 January 1883, 7 January 1884, 5 January 1885, 1 January 1886; Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments 23 May 1883, Louisville Courier-Journal 3 July 1884 (escorting prisoners).

1887-1890 **James D. Hines** Evening Democrat-Democratic primary winner 23 July 1886; Sheriff's Bond 28 December 1886, 24 January & 16 December 1887, 2 January & 24 December 1888, 1 January 1890; Louisville Courier-Journal articles 4 July & 24 August 1888, July 2 & November 9 1889, 1891.

1891-1894 **W. S. Ragland** Sheriff's Bond 5 January 1891, 4 January & 26 December 1892, 1 January 1894; Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments 3 June 1892, 13 & 17 November 1893, 11 & 12 January 1894 and 4 January 1895; Official Manual 1894.

1894 The new constitution mandated an election in 1894, making sheriff's terms of service three years, to start the first Monday in January after election

1895-1897 **Robert Rodes, Jr.** Warren County Circuit Court-Criminal Indictments 8 & 9 January 1895, Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 24 December 1895 & 16 December 1896, and Election Results to Secretary of State 2 November 1897.

1898-1901 **A. J. Cole** Elections results to State 2 November 1897 (elected), Warren County Circuit Court-Equity 28 October 1898, Official Manual 1898 & 1900, Louisville Courier-Journal Almanac 1901

1902-1905 **Robert Rodes, Jr.** Sheriff's Bonds 26 December 1902, 31 December 1903, 24 December 1904; City Directory, Official Manual 1902 & 1904, The Covingtons.

1906-1909 **F. Y. Patterson, Jr.** Sheriff's Bonds 20 December 1905, 27 February 1907, 29 February 1908, 1 March 1909; Official Manual 1906,

Elections Results to Secretary of State 25 January 1907, Warren County Circuit Court - Equity 25 January 1907, Official Manual 1908, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 1909, Journal of the Senate 1910, Confederate Veteran Vol. 18 1910.

1910-1913 **W. L. McNeal** Sheriff's Bonds 15 December 1909, 1 March 1911, 23 February 1912, 21 February 1913; City Directory, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 7 November 1913, Official Manual 1910 & 1912, Kentucky Board of Equalization 1913, Hopkinsville Kentuckian 31 July 1913.

1914-1917 **John C. Ray** Sheriff's Bonds 22 December 1913, 25 February 1915, 24 February 1916, 23 February 1917; City Directory; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 5 March 1914, 6 November 1914, 7 August 1917; Kentucky Directory 1914 & 1916; Kentucky Medical Journal 1915; The Southwestern Reporter 27 April 1916.

1918-1921 **James H. Tucker** The Daily Times Journal 6 September 1917; Louisville Courier-Journal and Park City Daily News September 1962 articles-said he was sheriff 1918-1922; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 8 November 1921, 6 November 1922; Kentucky Directory 1918 & 1920; Sheriff's Bonds 31 December 1917, 28 February 1919, 2 February 1920, 18 February 1921.

1922-1925 **Elijah D. Thomas** Sheriff's Bonds 30 December 1921, 18 December 1922, 28 February 1923, 4 January 1924, 30 December 1924; City Directory 1922; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 8 August

1922, 9 November 1923; Kentucky Directory 1922; Journal of the Senate 1924.

1926-1929 **H. Lee Kelley** City Directory, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes, Louisville Courier-Journal 18 January 1927; Sheriff's Bonds 19 December 1925, 1 January 1927, 29 December 1927, 27 February 1928, 28 December 1928, 29 April 1929.

1930-1933 **David Ernest Phillips** Sheriff's Bonds 4 January & 22 July 1930, 23 March & 7 October 1931, 19 May 1932, 22 July 1933; Louisville Courier-Journal articles 1930 & 1968-said he was sheriff from 1930-1934; City Directories.

1934-1937 **J. Broadley Davenport** Sheriff's Bond 30 Dec 1933, 1 Jan 1934-for wife Annie as Deputy, 31 July 1935, 20 Oct 1937; Kentucky Directory 1934 and 1936; City Directory 1937.

1938-1941 **Byron R. Hendrick** City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal 1966 article, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 18 November and 26 July 1939, 27 September 1941; Kentucky Directory 1938 & 1940; Sheriff's Bonds 3 January 1938, 28 May 1938, 16 May 1939.

1942-1945 **Boyd Downey** Sheriff's Bond 5 Jan 1942; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes; Louisville Courier-Journal obituary 25 Mar 1947-died 23 March of illness while Deputy for Davenport-served as Sheriff from 1 January 1942 to 31 December 1945; Kentucky Directory 1942; Court for assault 18 July 1943.

1946-1949 **J. Broadley Davenport** Sheriff's Bond 7 January 1946, City Directory, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes, Louisville Courier-Journal 10 Dec 1949, Daily News 1 January 1950-wife appointed sheriff for two days to finish tax collections.

1950-1952 **Paul Hodges** City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal article 5 March 1950, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 8 November 1949, Daily News & Louisville Courier-Journal articles of death in auto accident 26 February 1952.

1952-1953 **Edith Hodges** Elected to serve unexpired term of husband, Paul Hodges; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 3, 4 & 5 November 1952; 3 November 1953.

1954-1957 **Carl C. Jordan** City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal article, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes.

1958-1961 **Joe Franklin Hodges** City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal article, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 16 & 19 May 1958, 18 November 1958, 16 & 17 May 1960.

1962-1965 **Hubert Milburn Phelps** City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal article, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes May 1962.

1966-1969 **Christy Watts** City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal article, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes.

1970-1973 **Hubert Milburn Phelps** City Directory 1970, 1971; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes 7 November 1973; Sheriff's Bond 12 April 1972 and 16 May 1973

1974-1977 **Joe Franklin Hodges** Sheriff's Bond 21 December 1973, 7 January 1974 and 10 February 1975; City Directory, Louisville Courier-Journal article, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes.

1978-1981 **Jerry "Peanuts" Gaines** City Directory, Daily News & Courier-Journal articles, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes.

1982-1985 **Wayne Constant** City Directory, Paducah Sun, Louisville Courier-Journal & Daily News articles 6 Jun 1982 & 18 Apr 1984, Board of Election Commissioners Minutes.

1986-2018 **Jerry "Peanuts" Gaines** Daily News & Louisville Courier-Journal articles; Board of Election Commissioners Minutes; Sheriff's Bond 30 June 1993, 4 October 1994, (unreadable) July 1996, 26 August 1997.

2019 **Brett Hightower** 2018 election results, Daily News articles.

Key to Sources

"Daily News": Park City Daily News

"Kentucky Directory": Kentucky Directory for the use of Courts, State and County Officials and General Assembly of the State of Kentucky

"Official Manual": Official Manual for the use of Courts, State and County Officials and General Assembly of the State of Kentucky

"Board of Equalization": Report and Proceedings of State Board of Equalization of Kentucky. The State Journal Company, Frankfort, Kentucky

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